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ACTION IN EDUCATION

A PUBLICATION FOR COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

SPRING 2021

The College of Education
carves a new chapter in
its Facing History and
Ourselves collaboration
to shape equitable
classrooms. See page 4.



DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

A Year of Reflection

A year ago, I couldn't have predicted where we in the College of Education (COE) find ourselves today. Despite confronting new obstacles at every corner, our faculty, staff and students have expertly navigated the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. Preparing future educators, counselors and leaders virtually for an in-person and uncertain future is no simple task. But by listening to one another, offering up our individual skills and expertise, and moving forward together, we made it through an unprecedented virtual year.

COE takes pride in its mission to support historically underserved populations, not just in the Chicago region, but also globally. Our legacy is rooted in our determination to address environments and practices that create barriers to students' educational and social-emotional well-being. As COVID-19 spread, it exposed inequities that reach every facet of our communities. Unfortunately, COE isn't immune from these issues. We have spent the past year reflecting on how these exclusions came to be and how we can work to address them.

Faculty, staff and students have been meeting to examine the mission of COE, looking beyond the limits of equity and inclusion and exploring anti-racist practices and behaviors that must be incorporated into our curriculum, our procedures and the fabric of our beings. We have been hosting discussions that dissect race and prejudice in the United States. We have been meeting with diverse representatives of our student body to better understand the unique experiences and trials that our BIPOC and marginalized students face. Together, we are developing a plan to disassemble these barriers once and for all.

We are also exploring the injustices inherent in virtual teaching, learning and counseling, and identifying



ways that we can transcend those obstacles for our students and the larger community. Through our alumni network and school partnerships, we have been analyzing the current needs of teachers, students and parents with regard to virtual learning and are working to help bridge the digital gap. Most important, we are creating safe spaces for our colleagues to share their own experiences and perspectives. Together, we are showing up to listen and learn.

We recognize that our students and recent graduates need us more than ever. Classrooms were not opened to our student teachers last spring, leaving them with fewer experiences and, perhaps, less confidence. We continue to support our recent graduates by meeting with them to help guide them in the virtual world. Many of our current students require critical assistance as well, and we've worked to raise and distribute funds to help them register for classes, buy books and, in some cases, keep a roof over their heads.

As the nation transforms before our eyes, educators, counselors and leaders have responded with open hearts and minds. While we continue to provide expert instruction, guidance and support to our students, we look forward to examining ourselves and the field of education to ensure safe, inclusive and empowering educational environments for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Zions".

Dean Paul Zions

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Sister Mary Paul McCaughey

New Mentoring Microcredential

Last fall, Phyllis Cavallone, chief of academics with the Archdiocese of Chicago, approached COE with a request. Could the college help new teachers navigate the pandemic, and, to help improve retention, could they collaborate to create a mentorship program together? Thus, the New Teacher Mentoring Microcredential with the Office of Catholic Schools was born, facilitated by Sister Mary Paul McCaughey, coordinator of Catholic educational leadership at DePaul. Established teachers meet with their mentees online to discuss an array of topics, such as keeping children engaged online and meeting the social-emotional needs of students. In 2020, seven schools participated; eight more signed up for 2021.



Ines Worthman, daughter of Christopher Worthman, professor of secondary English, participates in a science lesson.

Virtual Student Teaching

Last year, every initiative that could go virtual did, including student teaching. The Department of Teacher Education launched the [DePaul Open Windows Program](#) last fall, pairing 60 education students enrolled in a methods course with children of DePaul faculty for weekly virtual lessons. DePaul students benefited from the fieldwork, and the children benefited from one-on-one sessions that expanded on what they were already learning in school, as well as other interests. The program continued this spring.



Kenneth Sarubbi Retires

After 52 years of service to DePaul, Kenneth Sarubbi, associate professor of physical education, celebrated his retirement on December 31. During his career, he spent time as the physical education program leader, dean of the School of Education (as it was called before it became the College of Education) and a recruiter of undergraduate students. He was the Golden Apple program liaison and an assistant men's basketball

coach, including during the Blue Demons' NCAA Final Four appearance in 1979. Sarubbi says he "immensely enjoyed teaching and counseling students" and working with faculty and staff "who have been like family."

Global Partnership Launches

This spring, 90 students attending Hainan Normal University in Haikou, China, will complete the first academic year of the early childhood [joint degree program](#) between their university and DePaul. In their second and third years, these students will be taught by DePaul faculty in China; at the end of their third year, students will study at DePaul. Right now, DePaul faculty are finalizing a process called "articulation," by which they compare courses between the universities to decide how credits will transfer, says Marie Donovan, who is program director of the partnership and an associate professor of teacher education. "We want to ensure a seamless transition from Hainan to DePaul," she says.



Photo courtesy of Hui Lin

Advancing Anti-Racism Initiatives

In the wake of social justice protests last summer, COE began [organizing](#) collegewide anti-racism conversations and initiatives. In formal monthly meetings, faculty and staff talk about race-related issues. Informally, they meet to discuss books and films that explore race, racism and racial justice. Faculty also are in continuous conversation with students to address ways they can better support our diverse student body and ensure that curricula are anti-racist.

Past Is Prologue



Detail of statue of abolitionist Harriet Tubman in Boston

“When we carefully examine cases of prejudice and injustice from the past, it enables us to take more informed action to work against the injustice that persists in the present.”

– Professor Hilary Conklin

The DePaul University and Facing History and Ourselves Collaboration continues in its mission



Hilary Conklin

Philosopher George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” With a strong belief in this tenet, the global nonprofit organization Facing History and Ourselves offers ways to integrate the study of history, literature and human behavior with ethical decision-making and innovative teaching strategies to overcome bigotry and hatred.

Recently, the collaboration between DePaul University and Facing History and Ourselves that began in 2011 entered a new phase.

Hilary Conklin, a professor of secondary social studies and director of the collaboration, says the program, now in its second phase, will use virtual means for the time being to support educators in their work of fostering inclusive communities. “The ultimate goal is that we create schools that are more equitable—that we actually fulfill the idea of using education as a tool to make our society more just,” says Conklin.

The second phase will run through 2027 and engage with three different cohorts: COE students, COE faculty and staff, and faculty at 12 DePaul-Facing History partner universities. For all cohorts, the goal is to promote more equitable and humane

classrooms and communities, while continuing to listen and learn. “Our learning is never done,” says Conklin. “I want us to always keep pushing ourselves to understand these issues more deeply.”

Conklin first learned the tools of Facing History and Ourselves in the late 1990s during her own teacher education at Brown University, and says they were invaluable after her graduation, when she taught social studies to middle school and high school students. Now, she shares those same lessons—many of which revolve around identity and how it shapes perceptions and interactions—with students at DePaul. The mission of Facing History and Ourselves, she says, aligns well with COE’s belief that education can be a tool for seeking greater justice and equity in the world.

Conklin, who has been involved with DePaul’s Facing History and Ourselves program intermittently since the collaboration began, assumed leadership of the program in 2020. While the organization itself dates to the 1970s, the DePaul collaboration marked the first time it made a sustained effort to instruct pre-service teachers in addition to practicing teachers. The collaboration became the model the organization used for working with other universities’ education students.

Conklin says she hopes DePaul students will learn practical tools to address the complex and difficult issues they’ll face in schools as they become teachers, school counselors and school principals.

“When we carefully examine cases of prejudice and injustice from the past, it enables us to take more informed action to work against the injustice that persists in the present,” says Conklin.

DePaul partners with the Chicago Teacher Residency program to alleviate the shortage of special education teachers

Nurturing the Special Education Workforce

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) have long faced a shortage of special education teachers. In 2020, there were 272 vacancies in these positions, according to the Illinois State Board of Education. The [Chicago Teacher Residency](#), a partnership between the College of Education and the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL), is working to help fill those vacancies by preparing special education teachers. The program also started providing preparation for elementary, middle school and secondary teachers this year.

AUSL is a Chicago-based nonprofit that seeks to turn around underperforming schools. Currently, it manages 31 schools across the city, serving more than 16,000 students, 92% of whom qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. AUSL launched the Chicago Teacher Residency in 2001 as the nation's first teacher residency program. Five years ago, DePaul became a partner in the program, along with another university. Last fall, the residency moved exclusively to DePaul, which is

one of the few area institutions offering a special education master's degree.

"The forecast for the next few years is that our network of schools will need a lot more special ed teachers, so we're trying to grow that program to be as big as we can," says Scott Sullivan, who is director of university partnerships with AUSL.

The Chicago Teacher Residency program, which has more than 70 participants for the 2020–21 school year, offers a 12-month, accelerated path to a master's degree. Participants receive a yearlong clinical placement at a school under the tutelage of a mentor teacher four days a week and complete DePaul coursework one day a week. The students pay a reduced tuition and receive a \$20,000 living stipend. When they graduate, they are placed in an AUSL-managed CPS school.

Sullivan says the residency aims to prepare teachers to hit the ground running after completing the program. "Building a better first-year teacher



Anne Butler

is the goal of the program, and I think that happens as a result of what we do," he says.

Residents apply what they are learning at DePaul in their CPS classrooms. They get firsthand experience in helping to create individualized education programs and learn about the extensive need for documentation and follow-through as a part of their training. They also share their teaching experiences with their mentors, half of whom are graduates of the residency program, and their DePaul instructors.

Anne Butler, an assistant professor of special education and director of the AUSL Special Education Program at DePaul, says she loves hearing positive feedback from residents every year. "They talk about the high quality of instruction they receive at DePaul in combination with the ability to put it into practice," she says. "They feel really well prepared when they have their own classroom."



A past cohort of the AUSL Special Education Program

Flexing His Teaching Muscles

As he alternates between teaching in person and virtually, Josh Cook credits his DePaul education for his flexibility



Josh Cook



Photo courtesy of Holy Trinity High School

Last spring, as COVID-19 shuttered schools and remote teaching became the norm, Josh Cook (MEd '17) thought back to his DePaul education with gratitude. "One of the things DePaul really highlights in the College of Education is flexibility. They present a lot of different pedagogies for us, tell us about different lesson-plan activities, different assessments," says Cook, who is the social studies department chair at Holy Trinity High School in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood. "Having that flexibility worked really well going into online teaching."

One particular teaching tool Cook learned about at DePaul is a gallery walk, which is similar to a museum visit. Students visit stations set up in the classroom to learn about different aspects of a topic.

When his honors world history class at Holy Trinity was studying the Black Death of the mid-1300s and how it affected Western Europe, he set up a virtual gallery walk that allowed students to click links to experience firsthand accounts of people who lived during that pandemic era. "Rather than walking around the classroom, they clicked around the website," says Cook.

Flexibility has long been important to Cook, who arrived at teaching as his second career after spending years working in postproduction in the film industry in Los Angeles. In that role, he discovered that he loved training new employees and decided to return to school and become a teacher.

After earning his master's degree in secondary education with a focus on social studies at DePaul, he chose to work at Holy Trinity

because he felt it was someplace he could make a big impact. The school is small—each grade has only about 90 students—and the majority of its students come from low-income families and attend the private school on scholarship. The school has an impressive 100% graduation rate, and last year, every person in the graduating class had plans to pursue a postsecondary education.

As a teacher of history and social studies, Cook says that 2020–21 has been a year like no other in education, with the pandemic, the presidential election and the Black Lives Matter movement to address. "Perhaps because of the election and all the social justice movements, my U.S. history students this year have been more focused, more interested, more curious than any I've had previously," he says.

He says he's been impressed by the adaptability of students. Last fall, the high schoolers returned to the classroom, but switched to e-learning again in November after someone at the school tested positive for COVID-19. Through the remote setup, he says, students have more opportunities for self-guided learning and independence, and he's enjoyed watching them adjust and become more flexible themselves. He hopes that some of the lessons in flexibility will stick around after the pandemic is over.

"I think we should respect the resiliency of these students, because a lot of times, when I see education in the news, it's all doom and gloom," says Cook. "For those of us actually 'in the trenches,' there are definite hardships, but I also think there's been some incredible successes."



As a bilingual learner herself, Sunny Park-Johnson brings a unique perspective to the classroom. Photo courtesy of Alyssa Hepker.

Breaking Barriers

A new book aims to help teachers educate language learners

Long ago, Sunny Park-Johnson noticed that there was a gap between linguistics and education. Teachers of English as a second language (ESL) knew how to speak English, but more often than not, they hadn't taken a course on the components of the language itself. An assistant professor of bilingual-bicultural education and co-director of the Bilingual Language Development Lab at DePaul, Park-Johnson has sought to bridge that gap. She and her co-author, Sarah J. Shin, wrote "Linguistics for Language Teachers" (Routledge, 2020) to help other teachers bring language and linguistics together.

The book is, in many ways, a bridge between Park-Johnson's personal and professional lives. At age 6, she moved from South Korea to Michigan and discovered that her school didn't have an ESL program or language interpreters. The school had her meet with a speech pathologist, a reading specialist and even a Japanese-speaking specialist to try to pierce the language barrier. She remembers feeling isolated, alone and misunderstood as she stood in the back of the room doing busywork while the rest of the class learned.

"Of course, that was many decades ago," she says. "But I still hear stories of classrooms that are like the ones I was in as a child."

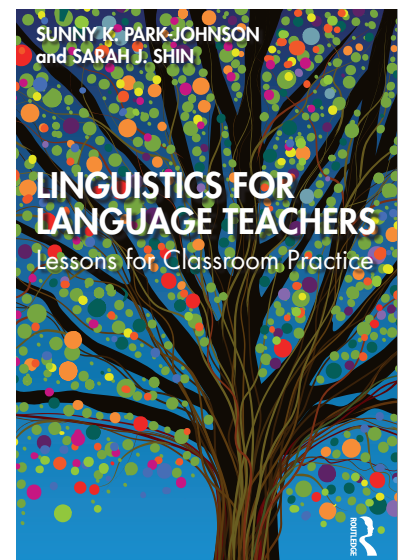
Her book explores the complexity of language—something that many native speakers fail to recognize. Learning a language is about far more than stringing together sounds and words; it is also about how those words and sounds are used and what they mean in context.

"I talk about it like it's a layered cake," says Park-Johnson, who received a DePaul Excellence in Teaching award and the Impact of Heritage Language Education

on Minority Language Speakers grant by the DePaul University Research Council, among other grants, to help fund her research.

Last fall, her own book was a part of her class syllabus for the first time, and she says her students found the scientific approach eye-opening. "It gave them a fresh take, a new appreciation for just how difficult the task of language learning is," she says. She hopes her instruction will help ensure that language-learning children won't have to struggle in school the same way she did.

"Teachers who know how to work with bilingual students, who understand language acquisition, who understand language and cultural diversity, can make such a huge difference," she says. "For students, it means you have a teacher who understands that you are not just two monolinguals glued back to back—you are a complex person."



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